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OFFICE OF  
NATIONAL ESTIMATES

## O. N. E. MEMORANDUM

*Rhodesia: Growing Troubles for the Smith Government*

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# CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

## OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

1 June 1973

### RHODESIA: GROWING TROUBLES FOR THE SMITH GOVERNMENT

#### I. A BAD START FOR 1973

1. So far 1973 has been a bad year for Ian Smith and his white minority government. In some matters which count most heavily with the Rhodesian electorate -- internal security, white supremacy, and foreign relations -- Smith has performed badly.

2. The long-dormant insurgents have suddenly come alive to terrorize outlying white farms and settlements, and to encourage resistance and dissidence among Rhodesia's 20-to-1 black majority. Moreover, recent political blunders by Smith not only dimmed chances for the much-sought settlement with Britain, but reduced Rhodesian leverage on Zambia, the sanctuary for Rhodesia's black insurgent movements. Within Rhodesia, Smith has failed to gain any substantial

*This memorandum was prepared in the Office of National Estimates and discussed with appropriate offices in CIA, which are in agreement with its principal judgments.*

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support among black Rhodesians for the Smith-Home settlement proposal of 1971, which would have assured continued white domination of the country's government for another 30 years, at least. In addition, on the economic front the steady rise in white living standards which has been maintained since UDI shows signs of slackening somewhat in 1973.

3. As white Rhodesians are becoming aware that Smith's policies are no longer working, they are putting increasing pressure on him to take effective action in all these areas. The problems are closely interdependent: how he responds to one will have a profound influence on the others.

*Settlement Prospects Remain Dim*

4. A year has passed since Rhodesia's blacks staged mass demonstrations against the terms of a proposed Anglo-Rhodesian settlement which had been worked out by Smith and Douglas-Home.\* The demonstrations killed the Home-Smith proposal. But they did not lead to any new settlement formulas, political initiatives, or even

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\* At issue is British refusal to recognize Rhodesian independence in the absence of Rhodesian constitutional guarantees of progress toward majority rule and of the rights of Rhodesia's blacks. For a discussion of the constitutional issue, see ONE Staff Memorandum, "The UK and Rhodesia: Last Chance for a Settlement?", dated 18 November 1971, SECRET.

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any meaningful dialogue between whites and blacks. The British will consider a settlement only if they have reasonable grounds to claim that its terms are acceptable to Rhodesia's black majority. Smith must either bring the blacks around, or work out a compromise formula with them.

5. Smith has offered to talk with Bishop Muzorewa, leader of the African National Council (ANC) -- the most broadly representative of Rhodesian black organizations. But Smith insists that the terms of the 1971 settlement proposal represent the government's maximal concession, and are not negotiable. Muzorewa so far has refused to meet with Smith on so restricted an agenda. Muzorewa wants to conduct real negotiations, in which the blacks -- who were not consulted in any prior discussions -- would put forward settlement proposals of their own.

6. Meanwhile the government has sponsored two new Rhodesian black organizations to promote the notion that a majority of blacks favors the 1971 settlement. One of these groups plans to send representatives to London to impress the British with 80,000 signatures -- about 1 1/2 percent of all Rhodesian blacks -- favoring the settlement. But such a phony demonstration of black consensus will not move the British toward renewed talks.

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*The Erosion of Internal Security*

7. Late last December black insurgents, which had been militarily quiescent for several years, began a series of armed raids into Rhodesia. So far the guerrillas have taken the lives of six civilians and a dozen soldiers and police. Even more alarming to the government was the discovery that the guerrillas -- who previously operated only from bases in Zambia and Mozambique -- had established supply bases within Rhodesia and were drawing support from local tribal communities. In addition, insurgents have staged hit-and-run raids within 50 miles of the capital; indeed, a couple of guerrillas were picked up in its outskirts.

8. Smith responded with a variety of tough measures. Collective fines were imposed on tribal villages found to have cooperated with the insurgents, and territorial army reserves were called up. In early January Smith closed the Zambian border to pressure Kaunda into preventing guerrillas from crossing into Rhodesia. A month later Smith, claiming to have received Zambian assurances against further incursions, reopened the border -- but the raids have

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continued.\* Smith's latest gesture has been a public threat to "clean out" guerrilla bases -- presumably in Zambia and Mozambique -- as "the only way to get on top" of the insurgencies.

*The Economy*

9. Rhodesia's near-term economic prospects are not promising. Booming exports of minerals and agricultural products in 1972 led to the largest export surplus since UDI. Yet Rhodesian industry continues to be starved for development capital and foreign exchange, as a result of which industrial output -- which previously grew at 12 percent a year or better -- actually declined slightly in the last half of 1972, and is expected to show little or no growth in 1973. This decline, together with the recent poor harvest, probably will dampen economic growth -- perhaps to as low 2 percent this year. Additional deterrents to growth are the Zambian-Rhodesian border closure, which will substantially increase the Rhodesian railways' operating deficit, and a decline in tourism attributable to uncertainties about internal security.

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\* Adding to Smith's political embarrassment, Zambia scorned his offer to reopen the border and since February has closed its own border to Rhodesian traffic.

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10. While all of this does not seriously threaten white living standards, it nevertheless means a continuing low level of imports in 1973-1974, both of consumer goods and capital equipment for the private sector. Rhodesian manufacturing, in particular, will suffer further deterioration of its capital stock and continuing constraints on the expansion of output and employment. The only real hope for regaining economic momentum lies in reaching a settlement with Britain, and in the resumption of commercial and financial ties which in all likelihood would follow. Smith is therefore under considerable pressure, particularly from Rhodesia's business and financial communities, to seek an accommodation with Britain.

## II. POLITICAL OPPOSITION

11. Although little information is available on important facets of Rhodesia's current internal politics, a couple of general propositions can be made about opposition to Smith and his policies. So far neither opposition parties nor rivals within Smith's own Rhodesian Front (RF) have seriously challenged his leadership. The RF virtually monopolizes parliament (with 49 out of 66 seats in the national assembly). Neither the biracial Center Party,

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which favors a modest political accommodation to the blacks, nor the new Rhodesian Party, which is pro-white supremacy and pro-settlement, has yet managed to take the center ground away from Smith. The rightist Rhodesian National Party (RNP) seems too far out of the Rhodesian mainstream to be a threat. Its leader has rejected the Anglo-Rhodesian settlement proposal as "a Pandora's box full of Trojan horses which must never be opened in this country". Within the RF itself, Smith emerged stronger from last fall's party conference, where he successfully held off hard-line demands for expanding apartheid and for a tougher line toward the UK.

12. But the weakness of the opposition to date does not mean that Smith is free of intense political pressure. On two counts -- the abortive border closure and guerrilla incursions from Zambia -- Kaunda has made Smith look foolish. Smith also managed recently to antagonize the British at the same time as he was urging a resumption of Anglo-Rhodesian talks. The arrest and detention, on unspecified security charges, of several ANC members and a (white) Rhodesian correspondent for UK newspapers, reinforced existing doubts among British leaders about Smith's regard for civil rights,

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and further reduced the already slim chance of an early Anglo-Rhodesian settlement.

13. Rhodesian whites -- particularly the farmers, who have been the solid base of Smith's political support -- are alarmed by the recent upsurge in guerrilla activity. Some in isolated areas have sent their families to larger towns for safety, and in some locations farmers have organized themselves into 24-hour guards. In any but the Rhodesian context such alarm would seem unwarranted. ZANU and FROLIZI,\* the only two insurgent groups active inside Rhodesia, themselves make no claim to having large numbers of men under arms. Infiltration routes are long and arduous; the largest group of infiltrators reported so far is around 80 to 100, and normally they break up into bands of a dozen or less. Engagements are small-scale affairs: typically an ambush in which 3-4 Rhodesian troops are hit, followed by a chase in which a similarly small number of guerrillas are hit or captured. While this is nothing like the scale of insurgency in the Portuguese territories, it nevertheless violates the Rhodesian concept of total security, which is a commitment the government has been

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\* ZANU -- Zimbabwe African National Union; FROLIZI -- Front for the Liberation of Zimbabwe.

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able to meet until recently. Even the fact that the guerrillas no longer can be counted on to drop their guns and run from a Rhodesian patrol, but often stay to fight, is a new and disturbing development.

### III. OUTLOOK

14. Most Rhodesian whites are torn between a strong desire to see Rhodesia's relations with the rest of the world -- particularly the UK -- normalized, and a fear that any constitutional concessions to Rhodesia's black majority would be the beginning of the end of the good life which white minority rule has brought them. It is Mr. Smith's policy dilemma to try to reconcile these contradictory concerns and at the same time to cope with a growing insurgency.

15. Currently Smith seems to be following a hard line. He has stepped up anti-guerrilla activity, criticized the UK for being "ignorant" of the situation in Rhodesia, and has refused to talk with Rhodesian blacks on any basis other than the 1971 settlement proposal. If Smith stays with this approach, he will be faced with a revival of the domestic black protest movement that killed the 1971 settlement the first time around, and he will have to crack

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down harder on black political activists, particularly the ANC.\* Ultimately this path would lead to a spate of other measures, including extended apartheid legislation and perhaps a program to give a semblance of self-rule and self-defense to tribal communities. Moreover, as guerrilla activities would in all likelihood not be stopped, Smith would probably press the Portuguese to permit sizable counterinsurgency operations in Mozambique and might even be provoked into launching raids against guerrilla sanctuaries inside Zambia. He would also be likely to seek additional South African military help against the guerrillas. But counterinsurgency is expensive, particularly for a country with a small (white) population to draw on. The government already has extended the term of military service from nine months to a year. Prolonged guerrilla activity, together with greater restiveness on the part of local blacks, would strain available whites Rhodesian manpower and budget resources. And these measures would be unlikely to restore internal security.

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\* *So far the evidence does not indicate that the guerrilla groups have any broad support among Rhodesian blacks, or that they have any more than nominal liaison ties to black activists, like the ANC, within Rhodesia. Indeed, the ANC specifically rejects a violent solution to the blacks' desire for greater political power.*

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16. It is likely that Smith will eventually seek new settlement terms with Rhodesian blacks, probably through the ANC. Any terms agreed to by the ANC leadership would probably be acceptable to large numbers of Rhodesian blacks and to the Heath government, which is eager to find an honorable basis for dropping the costly Rhodesian sanctions. We do not know what conditions the ANC would demand. Muzorewa, the ANC leader, seems to be both moderate and perceptive. He probably realizes that Rhodesian whites are reluctant to concede anything at all; and that, even if Smith agrees to talk, he will do so without any white mandate to reach an agreement. In this environment, if the ANC were to demand too much or to show intransigence, the talks would be broken off and the ANC would probably be banned. Our best guess is that Muzorewa would demand constitutional provision for successive steps toward majority rule; a guarantee against retrogressive constitutional amendment; judicial review of legislative acts; and expanded rights for blacks to organize politically.

17. We do not know what terms Smith would accept. He would not, under any conceivable conditions, agree to an immediate sharing of power with the black majority. On the other hand, as the pressures

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discussed in this paper continue to grow, and as hard line measures fail to solve Rhodesia's problems, Smith probably will become more receptive to ANC proposals for something beyond the terms of the now-dead 1971 settlement proposal. Even a token concession to black political aspirations, however, would put the scent of black victory in the air, and would inevitably lead to an escalation of black demands for more political power. We have almost no information on political activity among Rhodesian blacks, but we do not believe that they are politically apathetic, passively awaiting Smith's next move. Their stunning success 18 months ago, when they killed the Smith-Home proposal, and the emergence of the ANC as a continuing black political organization, suggest that they will be formulating their own plans for Rhodesia's future.

18. The next few months may see a lull in guerrilla activity, due to food shortages in the northern areas of Rhodesia and the onset of winter, which will take away much of the natural cover needed to conceal guerrilla locations and movement. This would give Smith a brief respite in which to work out his next moves vis-à-vis Britain and the ANC. But the guerrillas have tasted success for the first time. This will improve their prospects for local recruitment, and probably will assure them of continuing

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financial and logistical support through the OAU. By next November the guerrillas should be ready to launch a new wave of attacks inside Rhodesia.

19. Smith's problems are inherently insoluble. We see no action, or combination of actions, by which Smith will be able to eliminate guerrilla incursions -- or even to prevent their escalation. Similarly there appears to be no way he can meet the political aspirations of domestic blacks without yielding more white political supremacy than his white constituents would tolerate. All of this means that, regardless of how Smith chooses to meet his immediate problems, Rhodesia is likely to be the scene of increasing political and social turbulence during the next 12 months and beyond. In South Africa and the Portuguese territories political leaders -- some of whom already have written off continued white rule in Rhodesia beyond the next few years -- are understandably concerned that the deteriorating situation in Rhodesia will stimulate black nationalist groups and their supporters to renewed efforts against the remaining white redoubt states in southern Africa.

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